

Le Van Mill
2-1/2 miles northeast of Kutztown on
road #06203
Kutztown Vicinity
Berks County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-1030

HABS
PA
6-KUTZ-V,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

LE VAN MILL

Location: Pennsylvania, Berks County, Kutztown Vicinity,
2½ mi. N. E. of Kutztown on road No. 06203.

Present Owner: William Van Gilder, Route No. 2, Kutztown, Pa.

Present Occupant: Unoccupied

Present Use: Vacant

Brief Statement of Significance: Important example of one of the early grist mills in central Pennsylvania.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Le Van Mill was built by Jacob Le Van, a Huguenot, who came to Pennsylvania from France between 1712 and 1727. He was a son of Daniel Le Van and Mary de Beau from Picardy, France, who went to Holland after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Jacob came to America with three brothers. The mill was begun in 1732, making it, according to Fegley, the first grist mill in this area. The mill passed from Jacob Le Van to his son, Sebastian Le Van, and remained in the possession of the Le Van family until recently, when it was bought by Mr. William Van Gilder.

At one time there was a one-story wing of one room at the southwest corner of the south side which appears to have been a later addition. This has been demolished and the wall has been filled in with brick and plastered over. A photograph of the mill showing this wing and one showing the interior are in existence. Other changes from the original state include the removal of the interior partitions of the second floor, and the replacement of some doors and windows that open out onto the second floor gallery on the south side. Some of the wood siding on the second floor appears to have been replaced. The condition of the present stairs indicates that, although possibly original, they have been moved.

According to tradition, it was from a "balcony" of this mill that Count Zinzendorf, a missionary to the Moravian Church in America, preached to the settlers in the fall of 1742. The balcony referred to could either have been a large arched opening off an enclosed porch

or hall on the north side, or the open gallery at the second floor on the south side. On June 28, 1747, the Rev. Michael Schlatter, the organizer of the Reformed Church and the first Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Pennsylvania, preached to a large crowd of people from the same balcony.

References: Coon, Warren Patton, Genealogical Record of the Le Van Family, 1927.

Fegley, H. Winslow, Among Some of the Older Mills in Eastern Pennsylvania (Norristown, Penna.: Pennsylvania German Society, 1930).

Stapleton, Rev. A., Memorials of the Huguenots in America, Huguenot Pub. Co., Carlisle, Pa., 1901.

Croll, P. C., Annals of the Oley Valley (Reading, Penna.: Reading Eagle Press, 1926) pp. 66.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

The Le Van Mill is a simple rectangular building with a gable roof. The south wall is recessed behind the roof line to allow for a narrow second floor open gallery under the roof. The only noticeable change from the original form was the addition at a later date of a small one story stone room, with a gable roof, which projected from the south wall at the west corner. This is no longer standing.

The building is in need of immediate attention if it is to be saved. A portion of the stone wall at the northwest corner has collapsed, and the handsome stone arches at the mill race entrance and exit have pronounced faults. The roof is in poor condition, and some of the interior timbers are unsound.

The over-all dimensions of the mill are approximately thirty by fifty-five feet. The foundation and first floor walls are of stone; the second floor walls and roof are of braced frame construction with heavy timbers being used throughout. The second floor walls are filled with wattle and daub and covered on the exterior with vertical siding of board and batten type.

There are three doors, one is a single door with six panels, and the other two are double Dutch doors. The double doors have two-panel lower sections and one of the doors has a two-panel upper section, and the other has a glazed upper section with four lights. The windows on the north side appear to be original. They are small, double hung sash with six lights in each sash. The windows on the south side are of various sizes and appear to be replacements. No shutters remain on the building, but there is shutter hardware on the window frames.

The roof is a simple gable with a fairly steep pitch. It is covered in part by wood shingles and in part by slate shingles. The eaves are shallow, and there is a simple boxed cornice with an inward sloping, unmolded cornice board.

The interior consists of two floors and a wheel well. The two floors are now undivided by interior partitions, although originally the second floor had several at the west end for the miller's living quarters. The flooring is of wide unpainted boards. The walls of the first floor are plastered in the west half and exposed stone in the east half. The walls of the second floor are plastered in the west half and exposed frame in the east half. There are no ceilings and no interior doors at the present time. The only interior trim consists of the molded window trim and chair rail on the plastered portion of the north wall of the second floor. Of the hardware, only a few wrought iron strap hinges and latches are left.

The mill sits about forty feet from the road with the narrow end facing the road. The long axis is about twenty degrees north of west. There is a small outbuilding at the northeast corner of the mill which may be later than the mill, and may have been a small house or smoke house.

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